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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes services provided in Alaska for infants and toddlers with special developmental needs under Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1996-1997. Introductory information includes a mission statement, a listing of six early intervention service principles, and a summary of the history of early intervention in Alaska. Next, eligibility standards under Part H are identified, noting that 882 infants and toddlers were enrolled in 1996, including 470 who were Part H eligible, a 17 percent increase over the previous year. Information on Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) is provided, including a table detailing specific services that are part of IFSPs. The following section identifies the 17 Infant Learning Programs in the state's 17 regions. A summary of major activities reports accomplishments during the year regarding program standards and the review process, training/early intervention, the comprehensive system of personnel development, personnel standards, the paraprofessional service system, accessing funds, procedural safeguards and mediation, the Alaska Transition Training Initiative, and data collection. The final section reports accomplishments of the Interagency Coordinating Council's Early Intervention Committee. Listings of Committee members and program publications are attached. (DB)

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ALASKA'S

Infant Learning Program

for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and Their Families

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Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Application

July 1, 1996 - September 30, 1997

EC 306682

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Mission Statement

The State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is committed to promoting an accessible, flexible array of quality services to all Alaska infants and toddlers with special developmental needs and to their families in a manner that respects the families, communities and cultural differences and promotes a genuine partnership in all aspects of service design and delivery.

Early Intervention Service Principles

- Infants and toddlers are uniquely dependent on their families for their survival and nurturance. THEREFORE, services are delivered within a family-centered approach.

- Each family has its own structure, roles, values, ethnicity, beliefs, coping styles and unique needs. THEREFORE, services are flexible to accommodate the dynamic nature of each family and fluid to reflect the respect for and acceptance of their diverse and unique needs.

- Families, in their natural care-giving roles, make decisions about their children. THEREFORE, services support rather than supplant the natural care-giving roles of families, and providers seek to promote a family's autonomy.

- The family functions as a unit and the child's development occurs within the context of the family and child's everyday experiences. THEREFORE, family support is broadly defined so as to respond to the needs of all members of the family and is designed to occur within the family and child's everyday situation.

- No one agency or discipline can meet the diverse and complex needs of infants and toddlers with special developmental needs and their families. THEREFORE, collaboration and partnerships between families and providers in planning, implementing and evaluating services are established.

- Infants and toddlers deserve the opportunity to develop to their potential within natural home and community environments. THEREFORE, families have access to services that promote the inclusion of the child and family within their community.

History of Early Intervention in Alaska

Alaska's early intervention services have been available since 1978 through the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Infant Learning Programs (ILP) to infants and toddlers, ages birth-through-two, with special developmental needs. With the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Alaska had the opportunity to make these services family-centered, comprehensive and collaborative to those children who meet the eligibility criteria developed jointly by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (serving as the state Interagency Coordinating Council).

The Infants and Toddlers Served

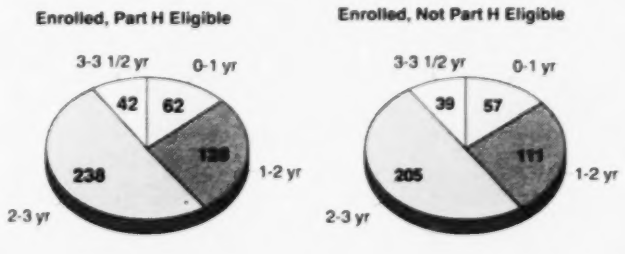
The Part H entitled services are a comprehensive, collaborative, home-based educational, health, and training program for parents and their children. Families eligible to participate in Alaska's Part H program include infants and toddlers age birth through two who experience a severe developmental delay that has been determined by the informed clinical opinion of a multidisciplinary team and supported by:

- The documentation of a 50% or greater delay in one of the five developmental areas; or
- A diagnosed condition that has a high probability of resulting in a severe developmental delay.

As funding allows, children with lesser delays are provided with non-entitled services.

On December 2, 1996, there were 882 infants and toddlers enrolled statewide, including 470 who were Part H eligible. Non-Part H eligible (412) children or infants and toddlers also were enrolled and received core services, including evaluation/assessment, family service coordination and home visits or play group sessions. This represents a 17% increase from the previous year's total enrollment, and a 10% increase in the number of Part H eligible children enrolled. Figure 1 shows the distribution of both Part H and non-Part H eligible children by year of age. Note that the enrollment figures include 81 children past 36 months of age, but still in the process of transition to Part B services.

Figure 1. ILP Enrolled Infants and Toddlers by Year of Age, December 2, 1996



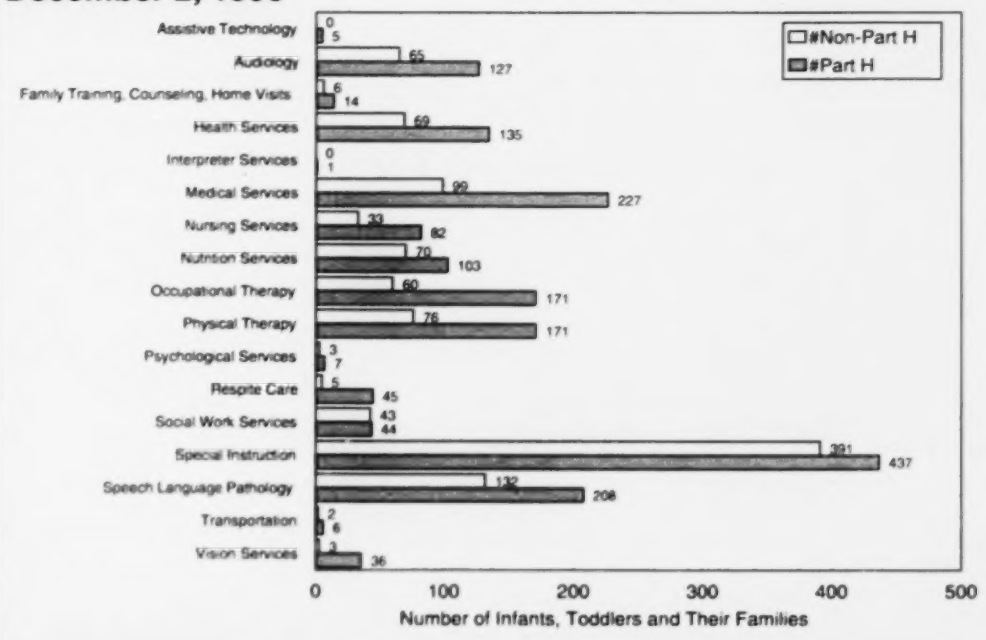
The Plan

A written plan for each child and his or her family is developed in partnership by the family and a multidisciplinary team of providers. The plan is called an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and is part of an ongoing process that is designed to meet the needs of families and infants and toddlers who experience developmental delay or disability. This plan includes information about the infant's current developmental status, the family's concerns, priorities and resources, desired outcomes and specific goals and services that are needed to reach those goals.

The IFSP includes activities that can be incorporated by the family into the child's play and daily care. Direct family visits may occur in the home or could include visits with the family outside the home, to school, doctor, Head Start, preschool, therapy, or other resources as needed. Part H eligible children and their families are entitled to all early intervention services that the team agrees to include on the IFSP to promote the child's optimal development. Non-Part H eligible children may receive fewer home visits and decreased therapy or other services due to limited funding.

Figure 2 shows the number of Part H and non-Part H children who received each type of early intervention service, according to December 2, 1996 Child Count data.

Figure 2. Early Intervention Services Included on IFSPs, December 2, 1996

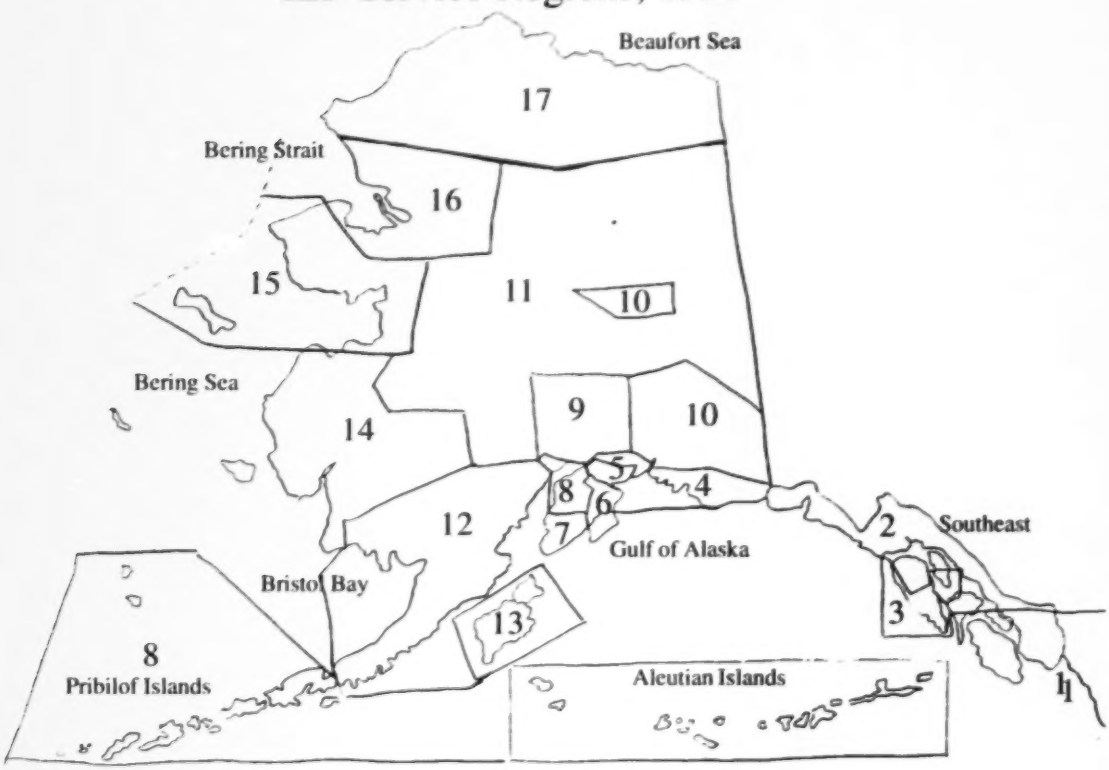


The Service Providers

The Department of Health and Social Services contracts with school districts, mental health associations, Alaskan Native regional non-profit corporations, parent associations, and other non-profit organizations to operate the regional Infant Learning Programs (ILPs).

Currently the ILP consists of 17 programs located regionally around the State with two consultant programs, the Blind/Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired Programs, and a Rural Evaluation Team which provides evaluation services to communities unable to support local evaluation teams.

ILP Service Regions, 1997



Area Number	Agency
1	Community Connections/Ketchikan
2	REACH/Juneau
3	Center for Community/Sitka
4	FOCUS, Inc./Chugiak
5	Programs for Infants & Children/Anchorage
6	Seward Life Action Council/Seward
7	Homer Infant Learning Program/Homer
8	Frontier Community Services/Soldotna/Aleutian/ Priblofs
9	Mat-Su Services for Children & Adults, Inc./Wasilla
10	ACCA/Copper River/Fairbanks
11	Tanana Chiefs Conference/Fairbanks (Interior)
12	Bristol Bay Area/Bristol Bay
13	Kodiak Area Native Assn./Kodiak
14	Bethel Community Services/Bethel
15	Norton Sound Health Corp./Nome
16	Northwest Arctic School District/Kotzebue
17	North Slope Borough DHSS/Barrow

Note: Statewide consultant programs for vision and hearing are based in Anchorage.

The Dollars

One of the goals for the service system is to access all dollars available for early intervention services. In addition to the money listed below to support services through the Infant Learning Program, other state, federal and private providers provide coordinated services to these young Alaskans. They include: public health nurses, audiologists, assistive technology services, private physicians, social workers, respite care providers, Indian Health Service, military hospitals and clinics, Lions Club, Home Health Care, and Family Resource Centers.

The following funds were managed directly by the State Early Intervention Service System for July 1, 1996-June 30, 1997 State fiscal year.

Part H Funds under IDEA	$1,545,710
State General and Mental Health Trust Funds	$4,371,900

Summary of the Status of Early Intervention

Between July 1, 1996 and September 30, 1997, state agencies and local area providers collectively worked on the following priorities: Program Standards and the Review Process, Training/Early Intervention CSPD, Personnel Standards, Paraprofessional Service System, Accessing All Funds, Procedural Safeguards and Mediation, Transition Training Initiative, and Data Collection.

Program Standards and the Review Process

Accomplishments

- Developed standards and a review process which has been presented nationally as a model
- Completed reviews of all Alaskan EI/ILP programs by community-based teams including parents, a peer professional, community members and a state representative
- Conducted joint reviews for agencies providing both Early Intervention and Developmental Disability services when appropriate

Next Steps

- Explore the development of joint standards between Early Intervention, Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health
- Update early intervention standards

Training and EI/CSPD*

**Early Intervention/Comprehensive System of Personnel Development*

Accomplishments

- Held a statewide conference in conjunction with Pathways, a 3 day biennial conference for parents of children who experience disabilities
- Offered IFSP training to Early Intervention programs
- Facilitated training in the Northern Region of the state
- Informed programs and staff about available training opportunities

Next Steps

- Assess statewide training needs
- Facilitate regional training opportunities
- Provide training to assist early interventionists in developing their portfolio

Personnel Standards

Accomplishments

- Researched experiences of other states requiring credentials
- Identified competencies and training requirements for Alaskan early interventionists
- Developed a credential to be required of early interventionists working in the State of Alaska
- Designed a portfolio format to document the competencies and training requirements of early interventionists

Next Steps

- Finalize the approval process through the Department of Health and Social Services
- Pilot test initial portfolios
- Develop training for the review panel and pilot test the review process
- Phase-in the early intervention credential requirement over a three year period

Paraprofessional Service System

Accomplishments

- Developed a training curriculum in collaboration with the University Affiliated Program, Anchorage
- Created five training modules for early intervention associates, available in VHS or CD-ROM
- Incorporated guidelines for early intervention associate job descriptions into ILP Operations Manual
- Included paraprofessionals from Early Head Start, Healthy Families and child care programs in Early Intervention training

Next Steps

- Coordinate and provide two four-day face-to-face training workshops
- Complete development of twelve additional training modules
- Enroll eighteen early intervention associates working toward the CDA credential
- Write policies regarding early intervention associates job parameters and liability issues

Accessing All Funds

Accomplishments

- Implemented fee-for-service billing systems in éight regional programs.
- Realized cost savings through contract therapists third party billing by 10 regional programs
- Collaborated with Medicaid to streamline the licensing and certification process for early intervention providers
- Created tools, including a billing manual and payment flow charts, for training new staff and increasing skills of current staff

Next Steps

- Offer additional training on implementation of sliding fee scales and billing issues
- Support full implementation of local billing systems, from invoicing to collection
- Develop a short video modeling family friendly "money talk"
- Reduce recovery costs through development of an integrated database program

Procedural Safeguards and Mediation

Accomplishments

- Distributed a procedural safeguards brochure to all families of children identified to be eligible for Part H services
- Collaborated with the Alaska Department of Education to develop a joint mediation process

Next Steps

- Develop and distribute Request for Proposal (RFP) for mediation provider
- Identify and train mediators
- Conduct awareness training about mediation services

Alaska Transition Training Initiative (ATTI)

Accomplishments

- Collaborated with ICC, Department of Eduation and Head Start in planning and implementation of ATTI
- Identified and trained team of statewide trainers
- Developed workshop trainers manual
- Completed statewide and regional needs assessment surveys
- Held two-day regional workshops in three hub communities
- Developed and presented awareness exhibits, conference sessions and newsletter articles

Next Steps

- Conduct additional regional workshops
- Develop Alaska parent guide to transition
- Conduct follow-up evaluation of training impact

Data Collection

Accomplishments

- Maintained a computerized system for data collection since 1992
- Sustained ongoing reporting of data on referrals, screening, evaluations and IFSPs by all local providers

Next Steps

- Establish parameters for enhanced data collection based upon programmatic and provider needs.
- Develop a new, more user-friendly and flexible database system in collaboration with EI providers
- Offer program support to facilitate conversion from old system to new without loss of data
- Assess needs and provide for adequate hardware and software upgrades to successfully implement the new system

Interagency Coordinating Council: Early Intervention Committee

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education serves as the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). The Council has multiple roles and accomplishes its work through several committees, including the Early Intervention Committee (EIC). The EIC is composed of 12 members. Six of the EIC members are Governor-appointed members of the Council, and the remaining six are appointed to the committee by the chair because of their roles as parents or service providers.

Work activities were taken directly from the Developmental Disabilities Plan for the State of Alaska, fiscal years 1995-1997.

The accomplishments for this reporting year are as follows:

Continued Transition Training

Communities are still receiving training to smooth the transition from early intervention services to preschool or Head Start. An evaluation component is being designed to measure the effectiveness of this effort. Outcome measurement will begin in early 1998.

Research Study Evaluating the Cost of Part H Services in Alaska

The committee solicited the assistance of a Masters level student to conduct research on this project. Paula McMeen delivered a final draft of her research project in September 1997. The study showed some inconsistencies regarding service delivery such as case loads and levels of service that are being addressed by an equity task force comprised of Department of Health & Social Services staff and early intervention providers.

Public Forums in Hub Communities

The Council conducted public forums in the communities of Kotzebue, Bethel, Juneau, and Seward. The community forums were usually held in the evening to encourage optimal community participation. Attendance ranged from 5 to 40 individuals. The forums were designed to ask; "What is going well?," "What is not going well?," and "What are some solutions?" Within 24 hours, a brief summary of the solutions and suggestions was returned to the community with the names of volunteers willing to work on the issues.

Road Map to Financial Resources

Working with suggestions from staff and Council members, state staff developed a double-sided document for the birth to three population of children who experience developmental disabilities, to guide parents or guardians to appropriate resources.

Small Budget Increases from Legislature

As a result of Council advocacy, a small budget increase was added to the lead agency's base. While some Health and Social Service programs sustained to budget cuts, or maintained current funding levels, the Infant Learning Program received a $150,000 increment.

Funding from the Mental Health Trust Authority

Recommendations from the Council resulted in funding from the Mental Health Trust Authority, which was used to leverage funding for Genetics Clinics, Program Facility Modifications, Program Equipment, Client Data Integration Project, and Transportation and Vehicles totaling $1,095,000. Direct funding to programs will result from a competitive grant process. Working with the Trust Authority is an ongoing interaction between Council members and staff to produce yearly budget recommendations.

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Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program Publications

Alaska Transition Training Initiative Materials

- **Making it a Breeze for 3s** (brochure) - Brief description of two-day training program.
- **Paddling Together Toward a Smooth Transition for Children and Families** (manual) - Training materials for a two-day workshop on transition at age three from early intervention services to preschool and other early childhood programs.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (information packet) - Overview of definition, characteristics, early identification and resources for providers and parents. Developed collaboratively with the Alaska Autism Alliance.

Child and Family Rights (brochure) - Description of child and family rights under Part H of IDEA.

Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program, The 1, 2 & 3s of Charging: A Billing Primer (manual) - Guidance and policies related to billing for early intervention services.

Early Intervention/Infant Learning Programs (brochure) - Description of early intervention infant learning program services and how to access them.

Early Intervention/Infant Learning Services Operations Manual - Guide to operating policies and procedures to be followed in delivery of early intervention services in the community and in the management of local Infant Learning Programs.

IFSP Training Manual - Outline, materials and overheads for teaching program staff how to complete an IFSP using the State of Alaska IFSP form.

Guide for Determining Part H Eligibility in Alaska (booklet) - Guidance for determining eligibility for Part H services. Provides clarification of concepts and procedures used in the determination of eligibility, including guidance on the selection of tools and methods to be used in the evaluation process.

Notes from the State (newsletter) - Bi-monthly newsletter to Alaska early intervention program grantees to update them on pertinent news, training opportunities and policy decisions.

Transition: Hospital to Community Services (booklet) - Guidelines to smooth the transition of infants discharged from the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) to community-based services. Developed as a collaborative effort with the Stone Soup Group.

Interagency Coordinating Council Certification of Annual Report

On behalf of the State Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) of Alaska, I certify that the ICC agrees with the information presented in the State's Annual Performance Report for federal fiscal year 1996 (July 1, 1996 through September 30, 1997). The Council understands that Section 80.40 of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), requires that the lead agency prepare an Annual Performance Report containing information about activities and accomplishments of the fifteen *(15)* month grant period, as well as how funds were spent. The Council has reviewed the Report for completeness of its contents and accuracy.

Jennifer Reynolds 1-16-98

Jennifer Reynolds — Date
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